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A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE HANSEATIC LEAGUE.



THE HANSEATIC RATH-HOUSE AT LÜBECK.

Man in society is like a flower
Blown in its native bed; 'tis there alone
His faculties, expanded in full bloom,
Shine out: there only reach their proper use.
But man associated and leagued with man
By regal warrant, or self-joined by bond
For interest-sake, or swarming into clans
Beneath one head, for purposes of war,
Like flowers selected from the rest, and bound
And bundled close to fill some crowded vase
Fades rapidly, and by compression marred,
Contracts defilement not to be endured.
Hence chartered boroughs are such public plagues;
And burghers, men immaculate perhaps
In all their private functions, once combined,
Become a loathsome body, only fit
For dissolution, hurtful to the main.
Hence merchants, unimpeachable of sin
Against the charities of domestic life
Incorporated, seem at once to lose
Their nature, and disclaiming all regard
For mercy and the common rights of man,
Build factories with blood, conducting trade
At the sword's point, and dyeing the white robe
Of innocent commercial Justice red.—COWPER.

I. HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION.

THE reader is probably aware that during the early centuries of the Christian era, nearly all Europe was included under the term "Roman Empire:"—the various provinces of Italy, Greece, portions of what is now called Turkey, Spain, Portugal, France, England, and parts of Germany, all fell under the dominion of the Roman emperors; the parts

which were not so included being inhabited by tribes scarcely if at all removed from barbarism. But the diversity of materials of which this empire was formed, its gigantic extent, the distance of some of the provinces from the centre of government, and above all, the luxurious effeminacy into which the Romans had fallen in the fourth and fifth centuries, all conspired to lead to a dismemberment of the empire. It is probable that even if no irruption of barbarians had taken place, internal dissensions would have ruined the empire; for the Romans had become altogether unworthy of the high name which they had attained before and at the time of Julius Caesar. But it was the influx of barbarians of various tribes,—Goths, Huns, Vandals, Franks, &c.,—into all the provinces of the empire, which brought it so suddenly to ruin. These barbarians appear to have come from all the countries which are now included under the names of Hungary, Germany, Russia, Poland, Denmark, &c.; and the cause of their irruption seems to have been not so much an enmity towards the Romans, as a search for the means of subsistence. They lived chiefly by hunting and fishing, manufactures were scarcely known among them, and agriculture was in a very rude state. Under such circumstances love of country scarcely existed amongst them: their numbers increased faster than the means of subsistence; and when they had exhausted one territory, they went to another. They acknowledged few laws but those of physical force; and that which they were strong enough to seize, they appropriated to their own use without compunction. The horror which we feel at the details of barbarian warfare arises from our judging it by a civilized standard: we censure uncivilized men for the want of that sense of

justice and right which, from the very rudeness of their natures, they are incapable of understanding.

One army of barbarians succeeded another in their inroads on the various provinces of the empire; the city of Rome itself was more than once pillaged by them; and by the end of the fifth century, the empire was wholly destroyed, the last emperor being deposed by invaders. The whole of Europe was now in the hands of the conquerors, and an universal chaos prevailed. After dispossessing the original inhabitants of their territory, they proceeded to divide it among themselves. The kings or chiefs of the various tribes of barbarians assumed a show of sovereign power, and took a share of territory larger than that which fell to others. But the subordinate generals and officers received their quota of land, as did also many of the meaner rank. As there was no general policy by which the whole were governed, each proprietor began to deem himself a little sovereign over the domain which had fallen to his share, and the dependants and serfs which he gradually collected around him looked up to him as a guide and superior. These dependants were often small proprietors of land, who were too weak to defend themselves, and therefore clung to some one more powerful, yielding up their small possession to him, and receiving it again from his hands as a *fief*, *feud*, or leased property. This was the origin of the *Feudal System*, which so strikingly characterized Europe during the middle ages:—the barbarians who had actually overturned the Roman Empire received the conquered land as booty, divided into parcels: these parcels of land, from various causes,—sometimes intermarriages, sometimes superior tact, and sometimes actual violence,—became gradually combined into larger portions, fewer in number. The owners of these large estates constituted the class of proud, haughty, warlike Barons, of whom we read in the history of almost every country in Europe.

But it was only in the open country that these Barons exercised their peculiar sway: in cities and towns their influence was much smaller. The circumstances which distinguish town from country life are sufficiently marked to show the origin of all civic communities. Where articles are manufactured, a number of persons must be congregated together, and if their city be on the sea-coast, or on the banks of a river, shipping and boats would resort to it, for the conveyance of the manufactured goods to other parts of the country.

The state of Europe then, from the seventh to the tenth century, (for it was not till the seventh century that the irruptions of fresh hordes of barbarians ceased,) was this:—The land was possessed chiefly by Feudal Barons, who had under them a large number of vassals and serfs, whose lives and properties had become almost solely at the disposal of their lords; the baron decided the disputes of his vassals in his own baronial hall: he called them out whenever he went to war; and was, to all practical purposes, their sovereign. The monarch of the country had a general sovereignty over the whole: but it was more in name than in reality. In England the contests between the Danes and Saxons and afterwards the Normans, made many changes in the sovereignty; but throughout these changes the nobles were more powerful than the monarch or the people. In Scotland the spirit of clan-ship prevailed down to a recent period. In France, the barons were more powerful than in any other country of Europe, and left to the reigning monarch only the shadow of authority. In Germany there were certain great lords who assumed sovereign authority within their own petty dominions; and Charlemagne was almost the only emperor during this period who had a real supremacy. In Italy, the country was broken up into a number of little independent states, some monarchical, some aristocratic, and others democratic. In Spain, there was a continual strife between the Moors and the Christians for the possession of the country; and when a military chief succeeded in wresting a portion of territory from the Moors, he immediately made himself sovereign over it; and thus Spain became broken up into a number of petty principalities.

The consequences of this state of things were many and important. National laws scarcely existed, for a baron adopted on his own domain those laws which suited him best. If one feudal lord had a quarrel with another he took the law into his own hands, and revenged himself by force of arms. Again, if one baron made depredations on the domain of a neighbouring baron, captured his castle, and plundered his adherents, the sovereign had seldom power sufficient to see justice rendered, but a scene of reprisal and mutual

attack followed, each vassal and serf being bound by oath to follow the plans of his lord, however iniquitous they might be, and thus all became involved in a petty but ferocious war.

But it was not only the domains of neighbouring barons that suffered from the lawless usages of the times: the cities and towns experienced the evil likewise; and we here begin to have a glimpse of the necessity for some such institution as the *Hanseatic League*. Whatever wealth resulted from the possession of large estates belonged to the barons, but all that which resulted from manufacturing and commercial industry belonged to the cities and towns, which were generally favourable towards the monarchs, and the monarchs towards the citizens. Each was likely to be benefited by a regular government which could preserve order and redress grievances; and each felt a distrust of the power of the barons. This is the chief point in the history of charters of incorporation, municipal privileges, &c. When a sovereign wanted his treasury replenished, it was the citizens, and not the barons, to whom he looked, and his authority as a sovereign was generally more readily acknowledged by the former than by the latter. As a return and encouragement for this favourable feeling, the monarch granted certain privileges to the citizens, allowing them to choose from among themselves the municipal officers, to govern the financial matters relating to the city, to establish tolls, dues, &c., and many more of a similar kind. This was the mode in which a certain degree of mutual support was established between monarchs and cities, and the time had arrived when that support was needed. The barons frequently had their castles in the immediate vicinity of populous towns, and those who were least restrained by principles of honour and justice, or who were possessed of most power, made frequent depredations on the townsmen, attacking them at unguarded hours, and, when attacked in turn, intrenching themselves in their castles. About the year A.D. 1000 sovereign power was hollow and unreal in Europe; baronial power was vast and overbearing; citizens were advancing slowly and gradually in manufacturing and commercial enterprise, and in municipal rights, but were troubled by the exactions and depredations of the barons, and also by Scandinavian pirates, who at that time infested all the ports of the Baltic and German Seas; and lastly, the Romish Church,—almost the only one then acknowledged in Europe,—was too corrupt and demoralized to improve the minds or conduct of men. It was in such a state of things that the cities and commercial towns in the north of Germany began to combine together for mutual protection.

II. FORMATION OF THE HANSEATIC* LEAGUE.

The city of Hamburg, situated on the river Elbe, in the north of Germany, was originally a military fort, built by the Emperor Charlemagne, for the defence of his empire from the pirates who infested the Baltic. As this fort was situated at the northern part of the empire it was generally the first to suffer from the incursions of the lawless bands of Scandinavians, and it was more than once sacked and burned by them. For four centuries it underwent various vicissitudes, but continued on the whole to increase in importance and in population. The inhabitants therefore formed alliances with various towns, for mutual protection. One of the first of these alliances of which the nature has been recorded, was made with the city of Lübeck, in the year 1241. Lübeck was a considerable commercial city, a short distance north-east of Hamburg, and the treaty of alliance declared that the two towns should jointly clear the country between Hamburg and the river Trave of robbers, and prevent pirates from cruising on the Elbe,—that the expenses should be borne equally by them,—that everything which might tend to the benefit of the two cities should be concerted in common,—and that their forces should always be united to maintain their liberties and privileges.

The alliance of 1241 was probably a separate proceeding between Lübeck and Hamburg, without relation to other cities, for there was, as early as 1169, a compact between

* With regard to the origin of the word *Hanse* two opinions prevail. According to one, this term is derived from two German words, *am see*, signifying on the sea, because the first Hanse towns were all situated on the sea-coast of Holland and Germany, and hence the society is said to have been originally called *Am see steden*, or *Cities on the sea*, and afterwards, by abbreviation, *Hanse* and *Hanse*. But the other and more probable opinion is that the word *hanse* is an obsolete High Dutch or Teutonic word, having the signification of alliance, confederation, or association, and hence the term *Hanse towns* implied *Confederated towns*.

twelve towns on the Baltic shore, for mutual defence against pirates: these towns were Lübeck, Wismar, Rostock, Stralsund, Grypswald, Anclam, Stettin, Colberg, Stolpe, Dantzic, Elbing, and Königsberg. It appears to have been a standing rule of this first confederacy that no town should belong to it but such as was either situated on the sea or on some navigable river commodious for maritime commerce. Another rule was, not to admit any towns which did not keep the keys of their own gates, and did not moreover exercise civil jurisdiction within themselves; it was at the same time permitted that the towns should in other respects acknowledge some superior lord or prince. The advantages of this confederacy were so great that other towns gladly entered into it; indeed, so rapidly did the influence of the confederation increase, that neighbouring princes and barons were often glad to cultivate the good opinion of the confederated powers, and even referred their disputes to them for arbitration. When this extension of the confederation took place, something akin to a general government became necessary, since the united efforts of a body composed of many parts are valueless unless some system is observed by the whole. It appears that when the inland towns of the north of Germany swelled the numbers of the confederates, the whole were divided into four classes, over which a certain city presided. At the head of the first class, and also of the whole league, was Lübeck, the rich and potent leader in the confederacy: this class contained the towns of Pomerania; and to the custody of Lübeck were committed the common stock and records of the confederacy. The second class comprised the towns in Westphalia, Cleves, Overysse, Guelderland, and Mark, with Cologne at its head. The third class, with Brunswick as the chief town, comprehended the towns of Saxony. The fourth and last class, at the head of which was Dantzic, included the Prussian and Livonian towns.

The general assemblies, for the management of the affairs of the confederacy, were held at Lübeck; and an extraordinary general assembly was held every ten years, at which they solemnly renewed their union, admitted new members, excluded old ones if refractory, &c. The confederacy also chose a protector or president, in order to give dignity to their proceedings; and the choice of their protector had a marked influence on the welfare of the league; we must briefly explain the position of the persons who, for the long period of three centuries, were the chosen protectors of the league. The country which we now call Prussia, was very little removed from barbarism at the end of the twelfth century; and in order to protect Poland (which was then a considerable kingdom,) from invasion, the King of Poland granted a strip of country on the shore of the Baltic to the Teutonic Knights, or Knights of the Cross, on condition that they would subdue, and, as far as they could, civilise the rude inhabitants. These warlike knights not only succeeded in this attempt, but established towns of much importance on the Baltic coast, which, under the names of Dantzic, Thorn, &c., afterwards became well known to Western Europe. The knights formed this territory into a republic, of which the grand master of the order was president. Now the rise and progress of this republic were nearly coeval with the Hanseatic league; and there were many reasons why the two should be on good terms. The knights owed most of their influence to the maritime towns on their coast; and the commerce of those towns could not be better promoted than by joining the commercial league. Again, the constitution of the league was essentially republican, and therefore more nearly allied to the dominion of the knights than to that of an emperor or king. These were some of the causes which led the confederacy to choose as its protector the grand master of the Teutonic Knights; a custom which continued more than three centuries. By this good understanding with the knights, the Hanse Towns became possessed of all the commerce of the south shores of the Baltic, from Denmark to the bottom of the Gulf of Finland, containing countries intersected by many large rivers flowing into the Baltic, and producing many of the necessities of life in great abundance.

III. COMMERCIAL ADVANTAGES OF THE LEAGUE.

About the year 1252, the Hanse Towns had commenced a brisk commerce with the various towns of Flanders; but the duties and exactions laid on them in that country rendered the dealings vexatious. Hamburg therefore represented the state of Flemish commerce to a general assembly of the league at Lübeck; and it was resolved to send a deputation from Hamburg, to Margaret, countess of Flanders, to treat

of more moderate duties, and of other commercial matters. Their wishes were acceded to; and shortly afterwards a similar deputation to Albert, duke of Saxony, led to similar results. These points illustrate the mode in which the league gradually acquired its power: the complaints of a single town might not have been attended to; but the associated merchants of many towns gave a weight to the representations, which, from that time forwards, monarchs and princes listened to respectfully. The opening of a commerce with Flanders was productive of important results. The league fixed upon the city of Bruges, as a *comptoir*, counting-house, or factory, for forwarding the commercial transactions of the league; and this proved of incalculable advantage by opening a communication between Northern and Southern Europe. The inhabitants of Italy, Spain, and Turkey knew but little of the countries near the Baltic, and were ignorant of the productions of those regions; but the spread of commerce under the league brought the two ends of Europe together, as it were, in a circle. The naval stores, the iron, copper, corn, flax, hemp, timber, &c., of the Baltic regions became objects of desire to Southern Europe; while the taste for the luxuries of Southern Europe began to spread in the North, as barbarism gradually wore away. Overland carriage was at that time rude in the extreme; and the conveyance of commodities from Northern to Southern Europe was by shipping belonging to the Hanse Towns; which proceeded from the Baltic into the German Ocean, through the English Channel, across the Bay of Biscay, and so round the coast of Portugal and Spain into the Mediterranean. But as the mariners' compass was not yet in use, the voyage was difficult and dangerous; and the passage from the Baltic to the Mediterranean and back again, was deemed too much for one summer. It became, therefore, desirable to have a half-way station, port, factory, or store-house, to which traders from both seas should bring their respective merchandise in summer. Now there were no towns so favourably situated for this purpose as those of Flanders, from their central situation, and from the circumstance that the long established manufactures of woollen and linen were at that time very flourishing in Flanders. To Bruges, therefore, most European nations sent their merchandise, and brought from thence the produce of other nations, of which they had need; so that this city soon became the general magazine of merchandise for all Europe; and from this circumstance, Flanders generally acquired a great increase of wealth and prosperity.

About the year 1260 a great accession of power accrued to the league, by the formation of the "steel-yard" in London. London was never a Hanse Town, properly so called; but the merchants belonging to those towns had certain important privileges granted to them for conducting business in London; and hence London became considered as a sort of ally of the league, though not itself included among the Hanse Towns. The German merchants settled in London, who may be deemed as a colony or college of Hanseatics, had their place of business in a building called the "Steel-yard;" and hence they acquired the name of the "Steel-yard Company." This company, by reason of their wealth and connexion with the Hanseatic Towns, were of frequent service to the Kings of England; and Edward the First gave them a diploma, which exempted them from any additional toll, custom, or tribute whatsoever; which diploma was acted on by the succeeding monarchs for a long period. The general warehouse of the company was in Thames Street; and the name of "Steel-yard," was applied to it, as some allege, on account of iron and steel being among the principal articles of their commerce; but, as others think, from a gradual corruption of the word "stapel," (*stapel, stafel, stael, steel*), "stapel" implying a general warehouse for keeping merchandise. As a return from the privileges which the Steel-yard company received from the English kings, they were bound, if at any time London should be besieged by a foreign enemy, to bear one third part of the expense of guarding and defending Bishopsgate, then one of the gates of the city; and were also bound to keep that gate in repair.

In the year 1280, we find the Hanseatics showing the extent of their power by a remarkably bold proceeding against the King of Norway. That monarch, influenced either by interested counsel, or by a belief that the interests of his kingdom demanded it, suspended the great privileges which the Hanse Towns had obtained from former Kings of Norway. No sooner was this resolution made known to them, than they blockaded with their fleets all the ports in the kingdom, so that nothing could be imported into the country by sea. The Norwegians, accustomed to the corn and

other produce of Germany, in exchange for their own dried fish, threatened a general insurrection if the blockade were not discontinued. The king was forced to yield back to the Hanse Towns the privileges which they had acquired, and also to pay them a considerable sum of money. This, it must be owned, looks very much like a stretch of power; for it is not easy to perceive what right, except that of the strongest, the Hanseatics had to proceed to such measures.

The year 1300 witnessed the leaguers growing in power and influence. The city of Hamburg obtained from the Earl of Holstein a great increase of privileges; and, in several contests which the towns had with the feudal barons, the united strength of the former generally enabled them to conquer. But power, wherever it exists, is liable to abuse unless checked. We find Edward the Second complaining to the King of Norway for having suffered several English merchants to be imprisoned and their goods seized, at the instigation of the Hanse merchants, "who," says the king, "by all possible ways, strive to obstruct the advantages of the English merchants." Indeed it seems pretty clear, that the Hanseatics acted on the Baltic as if none but themselves had a right to the adjacent countries of Norway, Denmark, and Sweden.

Another contest shortly afterwards ensued between the Hanseatics and the Danes. Denmark, although wholly separated from Sweden, is at one part divided from it only by a narrow channel called the *Sound*, on whose western bank are the cities of Copenhagen and Elsinour; and through this Sound all vessels have to proceed to and from the Baltic and the German Ocean. Now it appears, that, in 1348, the Danish fleet in the Sound, having interrupted the navigation of the Hanseatics by demanding toll, was attacked and defeated by the combined fleet of the Hanse Towns; most of the Danish ships were destroyed; and the king was forced to assign to the Hanseatics the fine province of Schonen, for the space of sixteen years, as an indemnification for the expenses which they had incurred. This is the first mention which we have met with, of a toll being demanded by the Danes for the passage of ships to and from the Baltic: it has been adhered to, more or less, to the present day; and has been a fruitful source of disagreement among the Northern nations.

In the year 1361, a naval contest of a more extensive character occurred on the Baltic, in which the Hanseatics played a conspicuous part. Waldemar the Third, King of Denmark, attacked the city of Wisburg, in the isle of Gothland,—an extensive commercial emporium at that time,—and carried off a large booty. As Wisburg was a Hanse Town, or was at least closely connected with them, the Hanseatics were greatly excited: they seized on the Danish ships and merchandise everywhere; declared war against Denmark; and, having made an alliance with the King of Norway, the Duke of Mecklenburg, and the Earl of Holstein, they attacked Copenhagen. The Lübeck squadron was under a commander, appointed by the citizens; and all the rest of the fleet was commanded by the Earl of Holstein. The allies succeeded in capturing the castle, and destroying the town of Copenhagen; but they failed in an attempt on Helsingburg. The Danes, in their turn, sent a fleet to Lübeck, and defeated its squadron, taking six of their ships, burning others, and forcing the rest to take refuge in the harbour of Travemund. The contest ended without any satisfactory termination of the difficulties for which it commenced; and this circumstance seems to have led to a frequent renewal of hostilities between them, in most of which the fleets of the confederacy were victorious. In 1364, three years after the last contest, the Danes received a total overthrow in or near the haven of Wismar, where their whole fleet was destroyed, and their admiral made prisoner, by the Hanseatic fleet, usually stationed at that once famous haven.

Four years afterwards we find the confederacy in alliance with Albert, king of Sweden, against the Danish monarch: the allies attacked him on the coast of Schonen, and took several Danish towns. As Denmark was at the same time attacked, on distinct grounds, by the people of Holstein and Jutland, he found it necessary to make peace with the Hanse Towns, by granting them new and great privileges all over Denmark. But even the concession seems to have been insufficient to allay the hostile feeling between the parties; for, in the following year, the confederates attacked Denmark with such vigour as to drive the king out of his dominions; they took the castle of Copenhagen, as well as many other castles, and made prisoners of many of the nobility.

IV. EXTENT AND INTERNAL GOVERNMENT OF THE LEAGUE.

Historians generally agree, that the period to which we have now arrived (about the year 1370), was that at which the Hanseatic league was at the zenith of its glory and power. It will, therefore, be desirable here to explain somewhat more fully the extent and internal government of the league.

The largest number of cities and towns that ever actually belonged to the league was 84, of which we here give an alphabetical list.

Anclam,	Elburg,	Königsburg,	Salzwedel,
Andernach,	Emmerich,	Kracow,	Seehausen,
Aschersleben,	Frankfort,	Kulm,	Süest,
Berlin,	Golnow,	Lemgo,	Stard,
Bergen,	Goslar,	Lixheim,	Stargard,
Bielefeld,	Göttingen,	Lübeck,	Stavoren,
Bolswart,	Griefswald,	Lüneburg,	Stettin,
Brandenburg,	Groningen,	Magdeburg,	Steudal,
Braunsburg,	Halle,	Minden,	Stolpe,
Brunswick,	Halberstadt,	Munster,	Stralsund,
Bremen,	Hamburg,	Nimeguen,	Thorn,
Buxtehude,	Hamelu,	Nordheim,	Venloo,
Campan,	Hanover,	Osabrück,	Veltzer,
Dantzic,	Harderwyck,	Osterburg,	Unna,
Demmin,	Helmstadt,	Paderborn,	Warberg,
Deventer,	Hervorden,	Quedlinburg,	Werbern,
Dorpat,	Hildesheim,	Revel,	Wesel,
Dortmund,	Kiel,	Riga,	Wisburg,
Duisburg,	Kolberg,	Rostock,	Wismar,
Einbeck,	Kolegne,	Rügenwalde,	Züphen,
Elbing,		Ruremond,	Zwoll.

But besides these, which were all Hanse Towns in the proper acceptance of the term, there were numerous others,—comprising, indeed, nearly all the principal cities in Europe,—which were allied to them, for the mutual protection of commerce and navigation: among these were Amsterdam, Utrecht, Stockholm, Antwerp, Rotterdam, Bruges, Ostend, Dunkirk, Calais, Rouen, St. Malo, Bourdeaux, Bayonne, Marseilles, Seville, Cadiz, Barcelona, Lisbon, Leghorn, Naples, Messina, and London. These towns were merely related to the confederacy for the convenience and safety of commerce; but the real Hanseatics subscribed to a common fund, out of which the salaries of officers, the expenses of meetings, &c., were defrayed. Lübeck and Cologne, as being the chiefs of the league, paid the largest quota towards this common fund; and the other towns paid according to their rank or size. The fleets were not maintained out of this fund; but each town furnished its own whenever wanted.

We have before observed that the confederacy, for convenience of business, was divided into four districts, at the head of which were the towns of Lübeck, Cologne, Brunswick, and Dantzic. All business occurring in each respective district, which was not of great and immediate importance, was usually left to be determined at the general assemblies of the whole confederacy, annually held at the head city of that district, where the records and documents of the district were deposited. But if the matter happened to be of great importance to their commerce, freedom, &c., it was reserved for the triennial meeting of the whole representatives of the Hanseatic League, usually held at Lübeck, where the journals, archives, and records of the whole community were kept.

Bruges has been spoken of as a place where the league established a *comptoir*, or general warehouse, for the reception and sale of commodities belonging to all the cities of the league. Various causes led to the removal of this comptoir from Bruges to Antwerp, where the Hanse merchants had a magnificent old house, resembling a college, surrounded by shops and warehouses. The next comptoir established was that at London, to which we have before alluded, under the name of the "Steel-yard," or the "German Guildhall." Another comptoir was established at Great Novogorod, anciently a famous commercial city and republic, tributary to Russia. A fourth comptoir was at Bergen, in Norway. Each of these comptoirs was governed by a corporate power, which superintended all the commercial arrangements of the league in the country where the comptoir was situated. At Bergen, the comptoir consisted of twenty-one large buildings; at the head of each of which was an overseer, who gave judgment on the different causes which came before him: above him was a council of merchants, consisting of one or two aldermen, and eighteen counsellors; the aldermen being chosen at Lübeck, and sent out for five years. The comptoir at Bruges, from its central situation, was more important. It included, at one time, three hundred merchants, who lived at different parts of the Low

Countries, but made Bruges their centre of traffic: when the merchants had been thus employed for a number of years, they had acquired such habits of business and such general knowledge, that the directors and magistrates of the comptoir were generally chosen from among them. The president was elected annually, and took an oath to attend to the interests and prosperity of the confederacy. The comptoir, or "steel-yard," at London, was governed in a manner nearly, but not altogether, analogous to the others. The steel-yard was surrounded by a strong high wall; all the persons employed were bound to reside within this wall, where they lived under a discipline as strict as that of a monk in his cell,—celibacy being one of the regulations imposed upon them. Each district of the league, on the last day of each year, elected four deputies, who were sent to represent that district at the London comptoir; and from these deputies a president was chosen. All these officers of the league, on entering office, swore to obey all the regulations and statutes of the confederacy,—to administer justice among the merchants under their control,—and to do all in their power to monopolise the commerce of England in the hands of the league; for this appears to have been a standing object of the confederates. As the wealth of the Hanse merchants was frequently desired by the monarchs where the comptoirs were situated, the confederates easily gained privileges which were very repugnant to the feelings as well as to the interests of the national merchants; and it was to defend themselves from outrage resulting from this ill-feeling, that the London comptoir was surrounded by strong walls; and a system of internal discipline introduced, which has had few parallels in the history of society.

About the year 1384, the leaguers distinguished themselves by destroying a nest of pirates which infested the Baltic. The Queen of Sweden, the Danish nobility, and the Hanseatics, signed an agreement to act together in the attainment of this object. In this agreement it was stipulated, among other points, that when the confederates should take any castle from the pirates, it should remain in the custody of the Hanseatics until they should be reimbursed the expense of the war. From this it may be readily inferred that the Hanseatics furnished by far the largest share of assistance on this occasion. Indeed, so great had become the maritime strength of the Hanse, that although Queen Margaret had become sovereign of all the three kingdoms of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, yet the Hanseatics were frequently an overmatch for her, and had more shipping and more wealth than all the three kingdoms put together. Not only, too, were the towns formidable in maritime affairs; but their power was also shown, though in a smaller degree, on land. The feudal lords, being jealous of their power, frequently molested the towns, and went to war with them; but the forces which the league brought against the nobles, were generally sufficient to subdue them.

V. MONOPOLIZING SPIRIT OF THE HANSE MERCHANTS, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

The engrossing spirit in which the Hanse merchants sought to extend their trade, frequently led to disagreements with the monarchs of the various European countries. In 1396, complaints were made by the English merchants trading to the Baltic, that the Hanse Towns interfered with their traffic, and committed many acts of injustice against them. Whereupon Henry the Fourth issued a declaration, that, "Whereas the privileges and freedom of commerce granted to the German merchants in England, *i.e.*, of the Steel-yard, London, were on condition that the English should enjoy the like in Germany; wherefore the said Hanse Towns are thereby summoned, either personally or by deputies, to answer before the king and council for the said injuries, and to make due satisfaction for the same." The declaration was also accompanied by a threat, that if the abuses continued, the privileges of the "Steel-yard" would be discontinued. As England was, even in that day, possessed of much power, the Hanseatics were more willing to accede to terms with this country than with the weaker Northern powers. Indeed, on one occasion, when some English ships seized on a vessel laden with wine, belonging to the Hanseatics, the Bruges comptoir, in a letter to the English king for redress, used a style of adulation hardly to be expected from such a sturdy body.

But depredations still continued between the Hanse merchants on the one hand, and the English on the other. The English ships made captures of many Hanseatic ships,

and even killed some of their crews. The Hanseatics were, at the same time, accused of having captured or damaged many vessels belonging to the merchants of Newcastle, York, Hull, London, Lynn, Yarmouth, Norwich, and other places in England. As the English and Hanseatic merchants mutually complained of these aggressions, King Henry the Fourth sent some commissioners to Dort, in Holland, where they were met by other commissioners appointed by the Hanse; and an agreement was signed, by which each party consented to make good the damage done to the other. But it does not appear that this congress ensured amicable relations between England and the Hanseatics; for we find that in 1411 King Henry arrested in the port of Boston certain Hanseatic merchants, until satisfaction should be made for injuries, losses, and murders, sustained by the English merchants in their intercourse with the Hanseatics on the shores of Norway: the merchants could only obtain their liberty on giving two thousand marks as security for their reappearance when required. A farther attempt was made to settle these differences by a treaty between England and the Hanse in 1417, by which each party was to make amends for injuries committed on the other. As an instance of the unwarrantable violence which often distinguished the Hanseatics in these contests we are told that, about the year 1407, "one hundred fishermen of Cromer and Blakeney, in Norfolk, flying from their enemies into the port of Windford, in Norway, were assaulted by five hundred armed men, belonging to the Hanseatics residing at Bergen, who bound the poor Englishmen hand and foot, and threw them into the sea, where they all perished."

The intercourse between the Hanseatics and the English appears to have been disfigured by great bickering and unfriendly feeling, probably because the English were powerful enough to resist the encroaching spirit of these monarch-merchants. But on the continent the Hanseatic power was more frequently felt and submitted to. Its force had become so formidable that in the year 1418 the emperor Sigismund requested a conjunction of the Hanseatic fleet with his own, in a war in which he was then engaged. The League, in the same year, interfered as mediator in a dispute between Eric, king of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, and the princes of the house of Holstein. Fourteen years afterwards a fleet of two hundred and six ships, (as it is said, but scarcely to be credited) having twelve thousand men on board, left the port of Wismar for an attack on the city of Copenhagen. This Wismar was a kind of neutral port in the Danish dominions, where the Hanseatics frequently contrived to raise up strife against the King of Denmark. The attack on Copenhagen failed, and Eric contrived to sow the seeds of disunion among some of the Hanse Towns, and greatly lessened their arrogance by threatening to give to other nations the same privileges which the Hanseatics had hitherto enjoyed in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway.

The singular relation between the English monarchs and the Hanseatic merchants was such, that though they continually quarrelled they could not do without each other. We find that treaties and disputes succeeded each other with great frequency. In 1437 there was a treaty between Henry the Sixth on the one hand, and the consuls and proconsuls of the Hanse Towns on the other, for renewing the treaties then in force; but scarcely three years elapsed before the old complaints were renewed.

The time was now by slow degrees approaching when the Leaguers were checked in their domineering progress by the commercial advancement of other nations, particularly Holland. The Hanse Towns which bordered on the Baltic (being also the originators of the Hanse) tried every possible means of keeping the commerce of that great sea entirely in their own hands, and pretty well succeeded. But still they were not a manufacturing community: they were dealers: they did not produce, to any great extent, manufactured commodities, but they bought and sold after others had manufactured. Now the situation of Holland gave her great facilities for manufacture, and the Dutch gradually established a commerce with other lands independent of the Hanse, simply because she had within herself resources for carrying on manufactures. The owners of freight ships, finding that a foreign trade was establishing in Holland, settled in that country, and the Hanseatics were no longer the universal carriers for Europe. This change of prospects was not met in a friendly way by the Hanse, and we find that serious differences soon occurred. In 1441 the Hollanders and Zealanders, having lost to the value of fifty thousand guilders on the high seas, by the depredations of the Baltic

Hanseatics, and being unable to obtain, in an amicable way, any satisfaction for those losses, the towns of Dort, Haerlem, Amsterdam, Gouda, Rotterdam, Hoorn, Enchuyzen, Middelburgh, Veere, Flushing, and Armuyden, fitted out a number of warlike ships. Having, by the aid of this fleet, twice beaten the Hanseatics at sea, and taken great riches from them, they compelled the Hanse to sign a very advantageous treaty, which was to hold good for twelve years after the year 1444.

This event was followed by many others in which England was an interested party. Some English ships having attempted to fish and trade on the coast of Iceland, against the positive prohibition of the Danish king, the governor happened to be killed in an affray with them; and in the following year (1448) the Danes, by way of reprisal, seized four English merchant-ships laden with commodities from the Baltic. The English considered this act to have been suggested by the Hanse merchants, and the "Steel-yard" merchants were seized as hostages till reparation was made. On this occasion an instance occurred, which was by no means the only one, of a defection of some towns from the common band; the "Steel-yard" merchants from Cologne and other western Hanse towns contrived to get their own goods and persons excepted from this seizure, leaving their brethren from the eastern towns to get out of their difficulties in the best way they could: indeed, the town of Cologne more than once broke faith with the Hanse, and humbly sued to be forgiven;—a delinquency which was never charged against Lübeck,—the first, the only, and the never-flinching leader of this extraordinary confederacy.

These wrangling disputes between England and the Hanseatics were allayed for a time, by a treaty for eight years, made in 1456; but the friendly feeling was hollow and transient, for we find King Edward the Fourth, in 1466, calling in question the validity of the powers of the Steel-yard merchants of London; and the merchants had to present him with a large sum of money for the renewal of the charter. Another charter was given in 1470, by which the Steel-yard privileges were given for five years to the Cologne section of merchants *alone*, probably for some pecuniary assistance rendered in that quarter. The Steel-yard merchants are frequently spoken of by our historians as an usurping body, who often went beyond their charter. Always trading in a body, they easily ruined single traders by underselling them: those merchants who were connected with the cities of Bruges and Hamburg were very influential in the Steel-yard, and indeed almost fixed their own prices at will, both for exports and imports. This influence was somewhat checked during the stormy period of the wars between the houses of York and Lancaster; but at the termination of the strife, compensation was made to the Steel-yard merchants for some injuries they had suffered during that period; and a new charter was given to them by Edward the Fourth, in 1472. This charter was confirmed, two years afterwards, in a still more extensive form, by Act of Parliament; whereby the Hanse merchants were freely to trade in England, and the English in the Hanse Towns; and various facilities were afforded for the commercial arrangements of the Hanse merchants. This compact appears to have been acted on for a considerable number of years in a friendly spirit: we will therefore now turn to the continental proceedings of the Hanse.

The confederacy frequently showed itself an overmatch for the neighbouring princes. On one occasion, we find the King of Denmark and Norway, the Marquis of Brandenburg, the Duke of Mecklenburg, the Duke of Brunswick, and other princes, leagued together against the Hanse; but their measures proved abortive. At another time the power of the confederacy was shown, by its interposition being asked by the King of Denmark, for the settlement of a dispute between that monarch and the King of Sweden. Shortly afterwards they were engaged in a war with the Dukes of Brunswick and Lunenburg, whom they defeated and compelled to make a humiliating peace.

We have said that Bruges was one of the cities at which a comptoir or factory had been established by the Hanse. But this does not imply that Bruges was one of the Hanse Towns; it was placed in the same relation as London with the confederacy, and therefore had power to ally itself or not with the confederacy, for particular purposes. We find that in 1471 a treaty of commerce was concluded between the Hanse and the city of Bruges, which stipulated that all the merchandise of the Hanse should be brought to Bruges only, as the sole warehouse for all the Netherlands; for

which end, certain ships should be placed at Amsterdam and Sluys, which the merchants of both parties should use; and which were also to be well armed against pirates. Five years after this event, the Hanse showed its power by disfranchising the city of Cologne, on account of the selfish manner in which that city had consulted its own interests in certain transactions, without considering those of the confederacy to which it belonged; and it was only at the intercession of the Emperor Frederick the Third and the Elector of Treves, that Cologne was again admitted into the confederacy. A similar instance occurred in 1478, when the confederacy sent a notice to the King of England, for the information of English merchants, "That the city of Colberg, in Pomerania, had separated itself from the Hanseatic confederacy, and is, therefore, utterly incapable of participating in the privileges of this league in England, until the said league shall certify that Colberg is again reconciled to it."

VI. DECLINE AND FALL OF THE HANSEATIC LEAGUE.

As we approach nearer to the end of the fifteenth century, we find many symptoms that a decrease in the power of the Hanse was approaching. The various countries of Europe, in proportion as their commerce extended, interfered with the exorbitant privileges of the Hanse merchants. In the year 1486, serious differences occurred between the league and the French, with whom they had, generally speaking, been on amicable terms. In 1491, a solemn assembly of the whole Hanseatic confederacy was held at Antwerp, in great pomp, in order to adjust disputes which were at the time pending with England and with Holland. All parties were actuated by grasping motives, and no satisfactory result followed this meeting; for Holland, as well as England, began to feel that commerce could be well carried on without the aid of the confederacy, and, indeed, in spite of its authority.

Yet, notwithstanding these partial discomfitures, the league was still formidable: in 1492 (the year in which Columbus discovered America,—an event which had much influence on the future fortune of the league), seventy-two cities and towns sent representatives to the general assembly at Lübeck. Their old enemies, the Dukes of Brunswick and of Lunenburg, were again defeated by them about the same period. Four years afterwards, they were involved in disputes with John, king of Denmark, on account of certain political events between the latter and the Regent of Sweden. The King of Denmark had been driven out of Sweden by the Regent; and, in order to punish the Swedes, he requested the Hanse merchants to retire altogether from Sweden. The merchants, however, little caring for the political struggles of others, resolved, at a general assembly at Lübeck, that they could not consent to limit their own commerce, merely because one monarch had baffled another. They refused to accede; but still the Danish king showed himself sufficiently powerful to be a formidable rival to the merchants; for his ships now began to traverse the Baltic without fear of the Hanseatics. Still more rapidly did the power of the Hollanders increase, as was shown in an event which took place in the year 1511. A fleet of Dutch ships, homeward bound from the eastern shores of the Baltic, and consisting of no less than two hundred and fifty merchantmen, and four ships of war, appeared in sight of the city of Lübeck. The Lübeckers thought this a fair opportunity to be revenged on the Hollanders for invading the commerce of the Baltic, which the arrogant merchants claimed as the exclusive right of the Hanse. The Lübeck vessels attacked those of Holland, took some, burned others, and drove the rest into the harbour of Bornholm, where a large Danish fleet lay. The Danes then assisted the Dutch in repelling the attack of the Lübeckers, and driving them into their own port. The Danish fleet had, in the previous year, ranged over the Baltic, taken all the Hanseatic ships it could meet with, burned the suburbs of Travemund, the port of Lübeck, and destroyed many small towns belonging to the Hanse. It therefore appears that the supremacy of the Hanse was now seriously attacked in the Baltic, both by the Danes and by the Hollanders.

An event which occurred in the year 1515, will throw some light on the overbearing system of commerce pursued by the Hanse. The Danish merchants, who carried the produce of Denmark to the Hanse Towns for sale, complained to their sovereign, that they were not permitted to fix the price of their commodities; the Hanse magistrates assumed a power of arbitrarily setting a fixed price thereon; and those magistrates, being themselves merchants, took advantage of their own regulation. The consequence was,

that the Danes were frequently obliged to sell at a losing price; as they were not permitted to re-export their merchandise from those towns after they had once exposed it for sale:—or, if that were not the case, they were at least compelled, if they refused the proffered price, to lodge their commodities in warehouses, there to remain until the prices changed in their favour. Every one, at all familiar with the principles which regulate commercial transactions, must at once see that such arbitrary measures as these, are utterly inconsistent with freedom of commerce, and subversive of the very principles on which it rests. The Hanseatics were not long in experiencing the bad effects of this system; for the king ordered that all Danish merchandise should be exposed for open sale at Copenhagen instead of being carried to the Hanse Towns. Two results followed this order: Copenhagen became the emporium for the whole of Denmark; and the Hanse Towns received a blow which hastened their fall, now rapidly approaching.

Had Sweden and Denmark remained at peace with each other, there is little doubt that the Hanse would have been more rapidly humbled by them. But for centuries there were repeated contests for the crowns of Sweden, Denmark, and Norway; and, as the Hanse Towns had always numerous shipping at their disposal, the various candidates for the disputed thrones were frequently glad to borrow or purchase the aid of the Hanseatics, by which the latter gained great influence which would not otherwise have been possessed. At one time,—about the year 1525,—the Lübeckers actually offered to sell the Kingdom of Denmark to Henry the Eighth of England, for a certain sum; but that shrewd monarch reserved his money until it should appear that the Lübeckers were able to do what they professed.

The year 1552 witnessed the first serious attempt to break down the monopoly of the Steel-yard merchants at London, after it had existed 300 years. These merchants had greater facilities and privileges than the English merchants themselves, and complaints against the monopoly now became general. The Steel-yard merchants usually set what price they pleased on both their imports and exports; and having the command of all the markets in England, with joint-stock banks or funds, they ruined the native merchants. They were also accused of defrauding the customs, by taking under their own names (as they paid little or no custom) great quantities of the merchandise of other foreigners not entitled to their immunities. It is said that they had succeeded in monopolizing English commerce to such an extent, that while they exported 44,000 pieces of woollen cloth in one year, all the English merchants together had not exported more than 1100 pieces. A charge was also brought against them of having repeatedly exceeded the charter granted to them, and of having, by a gratuity to the monarch, retained privileges which were not in their charter, and of thereby injuring the English merchants generally. In consequence of these complaints, the privy-council investigated the whole matter, in the reign of Edward the Sixth, examining the modes in which the various privileges had been granted, the parties to whom granted, and the manner in which the favoured merchants had conducted themselves. The result was unfavourable to the Steel-yard merchants; for it was ordered, "that the privileges, liberties, and franchises, claimed by the said merchants of the steel-yard, shall from henceforth be and remained seized and resumed into the King's Grace's hands, until the said merchants of the Steel-yard shall declare and prove better and more sufficient matter for their claim in the premises: saving, however, to the said merchants all such liberty of coming into this realm and trafficking, in as ample manner as any merchant-strangers have within the same."—The last clause shows that there was no unfair or illiberal spirit actuating the council: yet the result was a severe blow to the confederacy; for, from various causes, the comptoirs at Bruges, Bergen, and Novogorod had greatly declined, and London was the chief place to which they looked as the centre of their commerce. The comptoir at Bruges had lost its importance in consequence of the rising importance of the Dutch: that at Novogorod had sunk under the growing power of the Czar of Russia, who unceremoniously seized the goods of the Hanseatic merchants: that at Bergen fell when the power of the Danish kings became settled; for, independent of the spread of a commercial spirit among the inhabitants of Norway, the king tried to get rid of the Hanse merchants by a rather unworthy trick. An ancient toll had been long recognised, of a gold rose-noble, for every Hanse sail that entered the harbour: this word "sail" was always meant to imply a ship, but the king of Denmark and Norway now put a new

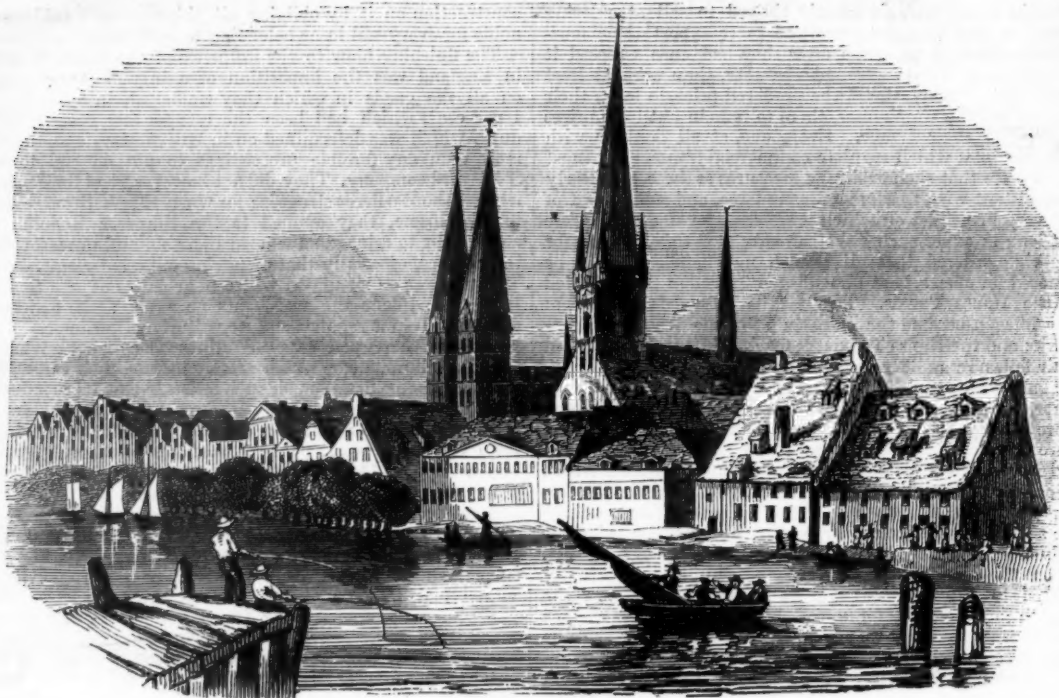
construction on it by obliging all ships to pay a gold rose-noble for every sail in or belonging to each ship.

The finishing-blow to the influence of the Hanse Towns in England was the imposition of a duty of 20 per cent. on all the goods in which they trafficked, instead of the 1 per cent. which had been the rate for 300 years. This duty, which was determined on in Queen Mary's reign, did more than any forcible proceedings to put an end to the Steel-yard company. They did not however yield their privileges without a fierce struggle; for when Elizabeth succeeded to the throne, they applied to the Emperor Rodolph to compel her to reinstate them in their old and unreasonable immunities, especially that of paying only 1 per cent. duty. The emperor expostulated with the queen; but she replied that she had done the merchants no wrong: all had been determined in a regular and constitutional manner. The Hanseatics hereupon expelled all the English merchants from Hamburg, a step which greatly injured their cause; for the queen immediately made such orders in council as reduced the Steel-yard merchants, not only to the level, but below it, of her own subjects,—prohibiting them, among other things, from exporting wool. The Hanseatics, bent on revenge, laid a duty of 7½ per cent. on all English goods entering Hanseatic ports; but this did them harm, for the queen laid an equal duty on all Hanseatic commodities.

The result of these proceedings was that the revenue and commerce of England were both much enlarged, while the Steel-yard merchants were deprived of those privileges which had hitherto given them so much power. The Hanseatics complained to the Diet of the empire, and recommended, as the only way of "bringing the queen to terms," that all English merchants should be banished out of the empire, and to prohibit English woollen goods from being imported into any German towns. The Hanse merchants were listened to by the Diet, and Elizabeth so far relaxed from her former resolution as to allow the Steel-yard merchants to trade in England on the same terms as her own subjects, provided English merchants were allowed to trade unmolested at the Hanse Towns. The queen being at that time at war with Spain, gave due notice to the Hanse Towns not to carry into Spain, Portugal, or Italy, any provisions, naval stores, or implements of war, for the use of the King of Spain, on pain of forfeiture of the ships so employed. In defiance of this injunction, sixty Hanseatic fly-boats conveyed wheat and warlike stores to Spain: they had proceeded by way of the Orkneys and Ireland, in order to avoid the queen's fleet, but they were taken by Sir Francis Drake, near Spain, and all the cargoes seized. This seizure led to much bitter correspondence between Elizabeth on the one part, and the Emperor and the Hanse Towns on the other. A general assembly of the Hanse sent a letter to Elizabeth, but allowed themselves to be betrayed into so much warmth that the queen sent them a contemptuous answer. Hereupon the emperor sent a message to her, and she sent a special messenger to explain, candidly and fairly, all the circumstances of the quarrel. Thus terminated the contest; for although the Hanse merchants petitioned to have the Steel-yard privileges restored, the English nation had become too wise to allow English interests to be frustrated by these monopolizing Hanseatics.

Meanwhile the League showed increasing symptoms of feebleness, in its dealings with continental states. The Kings of Denmark and Sweden, who had formerly been so often forced to yield to the Hanseatics, now bearded them in their turn. In 1591 the Leaguers endeavoured to force the town of Elbing, in Prussia, to discountenance English merchants, by forbidding their resort to that town; but the Elbingers had had too many proofs of the advantages of commerce with England to be led to this step: they wrote to Elizabeth, acquainting her with the proposal which had been made to them, and also their determination to continue their friendly relations with the English merchants, as did also the King of Poland. But the Emperor and the Hanse succeeded in compelling the English merchants to leave the town of Staden, as well as several other towns in Germany, whereupon the Dukes of Brunswick and of Holstein, and about a dozen towns in the Netherlands, sent letters to Elizabeth, expressive of their friendly wishes towards English commerce, and the queen at the same time ordered the lord mayor to shut up the Steel-yard, and to expel the turbulent merchants altogether from London.

Wheeler, who wrote about the year 1600, says, that the Hanseatics "are now so much decayed in power and strength, as that the state need not greatly to fear them. For, as the causes which made the Hanse Towns of estimation and



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account in old times, were the multitude of their shipping and sea trade, whereby they stored all countries with their Eastern commodities, (*i.e.*, naval stores, flax, hemp, linen, iron, copper, corn, &c.), and served princes' turns with their large and stout ships in time of war; we shall find at this time, that they have in a manner lost both one and the other long ago, when compared with what they formerly were. And if her Majesty should forbid all trade into Spain, after the example of other princes, they would, in a short time, be quit of the rest; for that trade is their chiefest support at this instant. Besides, of the seventy-two confederate Hanse Towns, so much vaunted of, what remains almost but the report? And those which remain, and appear by their deputies, when there is any assembly, are they able, unless with much ado, to bring up the charges and contributions for the defence and maintenance of their league, privileges, and trade, in foreign parts and at home? Surely no; for most of their teeth are out, and the rest but loose."

Wheeler was right: the process of decay, which he significantly indicates by the "teeth being out," was rapidly going on: the confederacy had lived to realise all the benefit which such an association was calculated to confer on society; and, like a worn-out frame, it was now, by a natural process, sinking into insignificance. In 1604, they had a general assembly, and determined on a solemn embassy to the various countries of Europe, for the renewal of their mercantile privileges. But the day was gone by: the English king, James the First, would have nothing to do with the embassy; and the King of France gave empty promises, but nothing else. In 1612 the King of Denmark, to support the expenses of a war in which he was engaged with Sweden, raised the toll or duties at the Sound, on vessels passing to or from the Baltic. These increased tolls were equally vexatious to the Hanseatics and to the Dutch; and these two powers coalesced, almost for the first time, in an attack on the Danes, in order to lower the Sound duties: Holland was to pay seven-eighths, and Lübeck one-eighth of the expense incurred; and the other Hanse Towns were allowed to join the alliance or not at pleasure. This circumstance showed that the confederacy was no longer one united whole, influenced by uniform councils. These disputes with Denmark lasted for a long series of years; for as the Sound duties constituted an important part of the Danish revenues, the king would not lessen his demands, so long as he had the smallest means of enforcing them.

The year 1630 witnessed the last general assembly of the Hanseatics at Lübeck; after which the confederacy was dissolved, having no longer power to make their coalition advantageous to the constituent towns. But Lübeck, Hamburg, and Bremen united anew, in a limited confederacy, for mutual assistance and protection: and this confederacy appears to have existed, with scarcely any interruption, until 1810, when the French armies disturbed the arrangements of those cities, as well as of Germany generally. At the conclusion of the peace, however, the league between Lübeck, Hamburg, and Bremen was re-established, and still exists. These cities are called the "free cities," or, more at length, "the republics and free Hanseatic cities of Lübeck, Hamburg, and Bremen." This confederacy has the same kind of power (but smaller in degree,) as that which belongs to the various kingdoms, principalities, and dukedoms, of Germany; that is, it regulates its own internal affairs, furnishes a contingent of troops, and has one vote in the general diet or parliament of the empire.

In conclusion, we may remark, that the birth, growth, and decay of the Hanseatic League formed natural links in the progress of European society. The good which it rendered in the thirteenth century was immense, but the seventeenth required not its aid. The ruthless attacks of pirates, and the unjust depredations of the feudal barons, gave birth to the League; but the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries presented events which turned commerce into other channels. By the discovery of America, Spain became a great power, and established a traffic with which the Hanse Towns had nothing to do. By the discovery of the maritime route to India, Portugal became powerful, and Lisbon was the emporium of Indian commerce. By the improvements in navigation, each country was enabled to send its own commodities in its own ships to foreign parts, without the aid of a central port, such as Bruges. By the growth of the Russian power, that supremacy which the Hanse had had in the Baltic now passed into the hands of Russia: and lastly, by the possession of great power for four centuries the Hanse had gradually acquired habits of grasping ambition, to which the advancing intelligence of Europe would no longer submit. These were some of the causes which led to the decay of the Hanseatic League, and we see clearly from them that the time had arrived when the continuance of such an alliance would no longer benefit commerce generally or the Hanse Towns individually.

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ADAPTED TO ENGLISH USE,

UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL OF EDUCATION.

By JOHN HULLAH.

Extracts from the Minute of Privy Council.

THOUGH vocal music has hitherto been comparatively neglected in the elementary schools of England, there is sufficient evidence that the natural genius of the people would reward a careful cultivation. In the northern counties of England choral singing has long formed the chief rational amusement of the manufacturing population. The weavers of Lancashire and Yorkshire have been famed for their acquaintance with the great works of Handel and Haydn, with the part-music of the old English school, and those admirable old English songs, the music of which it is desirable to restore to common use. The manufacturing population of Norfolk, in like manner, has shown taste in the cultivation of vocal music, and has rendered service in the production of the oratorios sung at the festivals for which Norwich has been celebrated. Similar evidences of the native genius of the people are scattered over different parts of England. Among the lower portion of the middle classes, the formation and rapid success of choral and harmonic societies is one of the most pleasing characteristics of the recent improvement of the class of apprentices, foremen, and attendants in shops, who a century ago were (especially in the metropolis) privileged outlaws in society.

The chief reasons why singing has not been cultivated to a greater extent among the lower orders in Great Britain consist in the too general neglect of elementary education, and in the fact, that vocal music has not been reckoned among the necessary subjects of the education of the poorer classes in this country.

Vocal music, as a means of expression, is by no means an unimportant element in civilization. One of the chief characteristics of public worship ought to be the extent to which the congregation unite in those solemn psalms of prayer and praise which, particularly in the Lutheran churches of Germany and Holland, appear the utterance of one harmonious voice. One of the chief means of diffusing through the people national sentiments is afforded by songs which embody and express the hopes of industry and the comforts and contentment of household life; and which preserve for the peasant the traditions of his country's triumphs, and inspire him with confidence in her greatness and strength.

A nation without innocent amusements is commonly demoralized. Amusements which wean the people from vicious indulgences are in themselves a great advantage: they contribute indirectly to the increase of domestic comfort, and promote the contentment of the artisan. Next in importance are those which, like the athletic games, tend to develop the national strength and energy; but the most important are such as diffuse sentiments by which the honour and prosperity of the country may be promoted. The national legends, frequently embodied in songs, are the peasant's chief source of that national feeling which other ranks derive from a more extensive acquaintance with history. The songs of any people may be regarded as important means of forming an industrious, brave, loyal, and religious working class.

Every schoolmaster of a rural parish ought to instruct the children in vocal music, and to be capable of conducting a singing class among the young men and women. The instruction thus communicated would enable him, with such encouragement as he might receive from the clergyman, to form a respectable vocal choir for the village church. This, in itself, would tend to increase the attendance on divine worship among the uneducated, and would spread an interest in the services of religion, which might prove the first step to more important benefits. A relish for such pursuits would in itself be an advance in civilization, as it would doubtless prove in time the means of weaning the population from debasing pleasures, and would associate their amusements with their duties.

Among the impediments to the introduction of a more general cultivation of vocal music among the lower orders in Great Britain, has been the want of a method of instruction, facilitating the teaching of vocal music in elementary schools. As a preliminary to the preparation of such a method, their Lordships had directed their secretary to collect or procure, from various parts of Europe where vocal music has been cultivated in elementary schools, the books in most general use in normal schools, and in

the schools of the communes, and of the towns. The manuals of vocal music were accordingly collected in Switzerland, Holland, the German States, Prussia, Austria, and France. These works were carefully examined, in order that their characteristic differences might be ascertained, as well as the general tendency of the methods adopted in these countries.

The chief common characteristic of these works is, that they are generally framed in the synthetic order, and proceed from the simplest elements, with more or less skill, to those which are more difficult and complex. The synthetic method appeared to be developed with the greatest skill and care in the work published by M. Wilhem, under the sanction of the Minister of Public Instruction in Paris.

The Committee of Council confided to Mr. Hullah, in communication with their secretary, the duty of adapting the method to the state of instruction in the elementary schools of England, and of introducing such improvements as might be suggested by his own taste and skill.

The committee of Council have now published only the First Part of the Course of Instruction. It comprises those portions of a course of elementary instruction in vocal music, which a master of moderate skill may easily succeed in communicating to an ordinary elementary school. The music is all of a comparatively simple character; it is arranged in synthetic order, and words have been adapted to it, chiefly suitable to the use of children in elementary schools, and therefore to be denominated *School Songs*. The Second Part of the Course will encounter some of the greater difficulties of the art, and will be adapted to the use of normal and training schools, and those classes of young men which it is desirable to form, in order to continue the cultivation of vocal music beyond the period when children of working classes ordinarily attend elementary schools. The words adapted to the music in this part of the course will chiefly be such as may inspire cheerful views of industry, and will be entitled *Labour Songs*. To these will succeed such religious music as it may be deemed desirable to furnish for the use of elementary schools.

The publication has been delayed, because it has been deemed expedient that the measures adopted for the instruction of a large body of the teachers of elementary schools in London should have attained a certain degree of success before this work was placed in the hands of the public. The Committee of Council were disposed to sanction and promote the success of the Singing School for Schoolmasters, recently opened in Exeter Hall, because they were of opinion, that without the aid of such means for communicating this method to the masters of elementary schools, the work itself would be of little value to persons who had received little or no musical instruction. Such a publication cannot supply the want of a knowledge of music in the master, neither can it generally enable any one to attain a sufficient knowledge of elementary music to fit him for conducting the instruction of an elementary school in singing, unless he have considerable previous knowledge, or unless he be instructed by a proficient in the art. The value of the course of lessons in singing to the master of an elementary school, who is not acquainted with music, arises from the fact that it renders the knowledge not only more easily attainable by himself, but enables him to communicate his own knowledge more simply and systematically than he otherwise could by his own unassisted efforts. The master of an elementary school, previously well acquainted with vocal music, will not fail to recognise the advantage he will derive from this Course of Instruction, and from the Manual, in rendering his lessons at the same time more simple and more comprehensive, and in clearing for him a path, by which he may lead his pupils imperceptibly from what is easiest of performance in the art to that which is most difficult, and from what is simplest in the theory to what is less obvious.

In order to facilitate the adoption of this method in the elementary schools of the Metropolis, the Committee of Council were pleased to approve a proposal made to them by Mr. Hullah, that a Singing School for Schoolmasters should be opened at Exeter Hall under their sanction, and the secretary received directions to afford his assistance in securing for this school such patronage and support as might appear likely to promote its success.

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